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SHALL WE RESCUE OR SHALL WE SAVE MEN?

You rescue a man from drowning when you pull him out of the water. You save him when you teach him how to swim.

You rescue a man from typhoid fever when you send him out of town. You save him when you make the town sanitary.

A man is rescued from the world when he has been removed from bad conditions. He has been saved from the world when the bad conditions have been remedied or destroyed and he himself has been given an inward power to rise above, or be indifferent to, temptation.

A man is rescued *from* wrong human relations; he is saved *into* right human relations.

Rescue, like quarantine, leaves conditions unchanged. Salvation, like sanitation, adjusts men to conditions which have been or must be changed.

Rescue treats individuals as separable from society. Salvation recognizes that individuals are indestructibly social.

Rescue is complete in monasteries; salvation brings in the Kingdom of God.



Is Christianity a religion of rescue or of salvation?



Do not think the issue a mere matter of words. It involves an entire view as to what religion really is. Whatever other distinctions we may find among them, Christian workers today fall easily into two classes; one class seeks to rescue people from hell without serious thought of changing the conditions which send men

to hell; the other is eager to save men from sinning but seeks also to cleanse society from the forces which tempt to sin.

It may be replied that the man with the rescue message is also eager to clear society of its evils. Does he not oppose red-light districts and saloons? Is he not eager to have men pay their debts and be kind to their wives?

Assuredly, at least as long as economic conditions are not seriously affected. But the avoidance of such evils is hardly more than respectability. They are the sort of things which Jesus talked very little about.

Must not the Christian conscience ultimately be responsible for the existence of poverty?

What has the Christian to say about unjust economic privilege, the exploitation of the weak, the maintenance of conditions that breed social disorder, crime, disease? A man can be respectable and be guilty of all these sins.

The man who believes that the gospel is a power of salvation rather than mere rescue believes that whatever is injurious is wrong. He believes that his Christian message is prophylactic as well as ameliorative.

An ounce of spiritual prevention is worth a pound of any balm of Gilead.

A church that conceives of its mission simply as rescue will be a parasite upon social evolution. A church which believes in Christian salvation will not only turn multitudes from their sins, but will also turn social evolution in the direction of the Kingdom of God.